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Title: Need to provide a special package to protect the interests of Pomegranate growers distressed due to decline in production of the fruit due to adverse conditions.

SHRI SHIVARAMA GOUDA (KOPPAL): Pomegranate cultivation is one of the major commercial crops in my parliamentary constituency Koppal and also many districts in the northern Karnataka region, which was once known for its export quality pomegranate. Unfortunately these days pomegranate growers are facing great difficulties in its cultivation. Problems like shortage of water, bacterial blight, a fungus disease, have destroyed a major portion of pomegranate gardens. The production of pomegranate has come down. The revenue loss is estimated at around Rs. 100 crores. As a result of this most of farmers in Karnataka are unable to clear the growing debt. According to an estimate loan amount of about Rs. 206 crores was taken from various co-operative societies by around 9000 farmers. But they are unable to repay their loans due to failure of pomegranate crop as it is suffering from various diseases.

The region had thousands of hectares of land under pomegranate cultivation. But now the area has shrunk to a few hectares. Withered pomegranate plantations can be seen all around. Many farmers have uprooted the plantations. They are now used as firewood. The farmers elsewhere in the district are also in a similar plight. As the nature's fury continues, there is not much hope left among them. Unlike food grains, horticulture requires heavy investment. Crores of rupees invested by farmers, have gone down the drain as most of the plantations have withered.

I urge upon the Union Government to introduce a special package on the lines of Vidarbha package to protect the interest of pomegranate growers, who have been trapped in the vicious circle of debt. I also urge to take all necessary steps in this regard without further delay.